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Crossroads of Diversity is a quarterly newsletter of the Joint Civil Rights Committee of the USDA Rural Development, USDA Farm Service Agency and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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Crossroads of Diversity

Celebrating the things that make us unique and those that join us together

March is Women's History Month

Honoring Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business

The 2017 theme for National Women's History Month honors women who have successfully challenged the role of women in both business and the paid labor force. Women have always worked, but often their work has been undervalued and unpaid.

The 2017 Honorees represent many diverse backgrounds and each made her mark in a different field. Additionally, the Honorees' work and influence spans three centuries of America's history.

These women all successfully challenged the social and legal structures that have kept women's labor underappreciated and underpaid.

Facing stark inequalities in the workplace (lower wages, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities), they fought to make the workplace a less hostile environment for women.

They succeeded in expanding women's participation in commerce and their power in the paid labor force. As labor and business leaders and innovators they defied the social mores of their times by demonstrating women's ability to create organizations and establish their own businesses that paved the way for better working conditions and wages for themselves and other women.

They proved that women could succeed in every field. While each Honoree is extraordinary, each is also ordinary in her own way, proving that women business and labor leaders can and should be considered the norm. Most importantly, the 2017 Honorees paved the way for generations of women labor and business leaders to follow. *(From National Women's History Project | www.nwhp.org)*

LUCY PARSONS (1853-1942)

LABOR ORGANIZER & SOCIALIST LEADER •
FOUNDED INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE
WORLD IN 1905 • BORN OF NATIVE AMERICAN,
AFRICAN AMERICAN AND MEXICAN
HERITAGE • CHAMPIONED WORKERS' RIGHTS,
HOMELESS & WOMEN RIGHTS • ORGANIZED
FIRST "SIT-IN" STRIKES

Honoring Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2017



For a complete list of honorees go to www.nwhp.org.



LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION HIGHLIGHTS KOREAN CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

The Korean Cultural Center (KCC) in Des Moines hosted its annual Lunar New Year celebration this year on Jan. 28 at St Timothy's Episcopal Church in West Des Moines. A free event, open to the public, the celebration seeks to educate central Iowans about the beauty of traditional Korean culture. The event included games, songs, demonstrations, and a delicious lunch of traditional Korean foods.

One of the most important holidays in Korea (as well as in many other Asian cultures), the Lunar New Year is a time for honoring the bonds of family, remembering ancestors, and inviting in good luck, health and prosperity for the year ahead.

As the mother of a child adopted from Korea, I have been involved with the KCC since its inception in 1999. It has been a great joy to learn about the rich heritage of this ancient and beautiful culture.

As they say in Korea, Saehae Bokmahni Bahduseyo (Happy New Year)!

(Submitted by Jean Sandstrom, Iowa NRCS LGBT SEPM)



(Left to right) Children playing the traditional Korean board game, "Yut". Rice, bulgogi (Korean barbequed beef), and chapchae (sweet potato noodles with veggies). Children in colorful Korean dress preparing to learn how to bow to their parents and grandparents – an important part of Korean New Year traditions.

Discovering “Hidden” History Featured in OSCAR Nominated Film

Every year after the OSCAR nominations are announced, I head to the movies to watch the nominated films and performances I have missed. (I am an OSCAR geek and love to predict which films and performances will win.) This year, one of these films was *Hidden Figures*.

This film is based on the remarkable true life stories of three women, known as “human computers”. The film follows these women, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson, as they quickly rose the ranks of NASA alongside many of history’s greatest minds specifically tasked with calculating the momentous launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, and guaranteeing his safe return.

Before seeing this film, I had never heard of these women. I didn’t realize their achievements or the contributions of the other “human computers.” While watching this film, I felt both ignorant and inspired.

Hopefully, you already know about this great moment in our country’s history. But if not, I would recommend seeing the film. The article below from the NASA website, features the story of Katherine Johnson, the lead character in the film.

(Submitted by Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Officer Laura Crowell.)



Katherine Johnson: The Girl Who Loved to Count

“I counted everything. I counted the steps to the road, the steps up to church, the number of dishes and silverware I washed ... anything that could be counted, I did.” So said Katherine Johnson, recipient of the 2015 National Medal of Freedom.

Born in 1918 in the little town of White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, Johnson was a research mathematician, who by her own admission, was simply fascinated by numbers. Fascinated by numbers and

smart to boot, for by the time she was 10 years old, she was a high school freshman--a truly amazing feat in an era when school for African-Americans normally stopped at eighth grade for those could indulge in that luxury. Her father, Joshua, was determined that his bright little girl would have a chance to meet her potential. He drove his family 120 miles to Institute, West Virginia, where she could continue her education through high school. Johnson’s aca-

Continued from page 3...

demic performance proved her father's decision was the right one: Katherine skipped though grades to graduate from high school at 14, from college at 18.

In 1953, after years as a teacher and later as a stay-at-home mom, she began working for NASA's predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, or NACA. The NACA had taken the unusual step of hiring women for the tedious and precise work of measuring and calculating the results of wind tunnel tests in 1935. In a time before the electronic computers we know today, these women had the job title of "computer."

During World War II, the NACA expanded this effort to include African-American women. The NACA was so pleased with the results that, unlike many organizations, they kept the women computers at work after the war. By 1953 the growing demands of early space research meant there were openings for African-American computers at Langley Research Center's Guidance and Navigation Department – and Katherine Johnson found the perfect place to put her extraordinary mathematical skills to work.

As a computer, she calculated the trajectory for Alan Shepard, the first American in space. Even after NASA began using electronic computers, John Glenn requested that she personally recheck the calculations made by the new electronic computers before his flight aboard Friendship 7 – the mission on which he became the first American to orbit the Earth.

She continued to work at NASA until 1986 combining her math talent with electronic computer skills. Her calculations proved as critical to the success of the Apollo Moon landing program and the

start of the Space Shuttle program, as they did to those first steps on the country's journey into space.

From honorary doctorates to the 1967 NASA Lunar Orbiter Spacecraft and Operations team award (for pioneering work in the field of navigation problems supporting the five spacecraft that orbited and mapped the moon in preparation for the Apollo program), Katherine Johnson has led a life positively littered with honors. On November 24, 2015, she received the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Barack H. Obama.

Not bad, for a little girl from West Virginia, who coincidentally (or maybe not) was born on August 26: Women's Equality Day.

NASA is featuring the work of the "human computers" in a exhibit called "When the Computer Wore a Skirt: NASA's Human Computers". It focuses on three women — Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson and Katherine Johnson — who were illuminated in Margot Lee Shetterly's book "Hidden Figures" and the major motion picture of the same name. Located in the museum's 20th century gallery, it was created with support from the Hampton Convention and Visitor Bureau and assistance from NASA's Langley Research Center.

(Article from: <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/katherine-johnson-the-girl-who-loved-to-count>)

Request for Future Submissions

This newsletter is published every quarter. The committee invites all readers to submit articles. Previous submissions have included articles on diversity issues and challenges, celebrations of cultures, conference and meeting announcements and much more. Please submit items to your agency's state civil rights coordinator:

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